

Faith and Inspiration

Clarity of Vision



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Vincent V. Marshburn -
Among human beings, sight is arguably one of the most fundamental and essential senses. One could contend that it is a primary sense through which we perceive and discover the world. Any study of human anatomy and physiology reveals that our ocular organ is one of the most complex and remarkable biological components of our body. The function of the eye is premised upon the mechanism of cellular and molecular interaction with light. The electrochemical results which occur within our brain is what we describe as "sight." The neural significance of eyesight is attested to by the fact that not only is there an entire portion or "quadrant" of the brain solely dedicated to its basic operation (i.e., the occipital lobe), but the proper performance of optical facility is also very much dependent on other major parts of the brain as well. Truly, this is an amazing specimen of organic engineering. Lack or failure of eyesight is generally considered a detriment. So, while, on the one hand, people are known to be able to adapt to blindness by what appears to be an overcompensation by other senses, the fact remains that sight is a truly singular and valuable ability by which we interact with and ascertain the world around us. Obviously, this is not to say that those who may be physically blind have any less value as individuals or that they are not capable of impressive or commendable accomplishments. However, it is difficult to

deny that there are certain benefits to possessing this particular sensory capacity. In surveying history, one can recognize specific efforts to aid or amplify human vision to varying degrees. A magnifying lens was described as early as the 5th century BC; spectacles or eyeglasses were apparently devised and in use by around the 1200s AD; microscopes were developed during the 1500s, and telescopes were invented during the 1600s. Given the nature of modern technology and the anticipation of future developments, it will be interesting to observe and experience the heights and intensities to which human vision can be extended. In the television series "Star Trek: The Next Generation," Geordi La Forge is the chief engineer aboard the starship USS Enterprise NCC-1701-D. One of Geordi's most obvious defining features as a character is his reliance on a piece of equipment known as a VISOR (Visual Instrument and Sensory Organ Replacement) which augments and enhances his vision to compensate for his congenital blindness. With the VISOR in place across his eyes, Geordi can visually perceive wavelengths of electromagnetic energy outside the normal range of human vision. (Somewhat ironically, during actual filming of the show, the actor's eyesight was generally impaired due to the prop.) As a member of a crew whose aim is to explore the lengths and breadths of the galaxy, this capability comes in quite handy in various situations. On the other hand, without the VISOR, Geordi remains as blind as he was at birth. In one episode, Geordi's VISOR enables him to identify a specific stream of neutrinos (unique subatomic particles) which leads

him towards a path of being rescued after being unintentionally stranded on an inhospitable planet. In another episode, the technical capabilities of his electronic optical accessory inspire him towards a solution for averting disaster when a collapsed star's remnant is on a collision course with a small inhabited planet. And in yet another example of fortuitousness and serendipity, there is the episode in which Geordi is able to view — and ultimately release — an otherwise undetectable alien entity which has been inadvertently trapped aboard a doomed science vessel. Geordi not only acknowledges his perceived physical shortcoming and his utter dependence upon an artificial sensory apparatus, he fully embraces the challenge and strives to be a vital, contributing member of the crew, using his "gift" for the betterment of others. Geordi considers his upgraded sight or vision to be a boon bestowed upon him for a greater purpose — to ultimately serve others. As we know, sight or vision can also be described as the cognitive, psychological, even philosophical formulation of consciousness, conceptualization, and comprehension. The ability to foresee, imagine, or discern a goal or outcome can be greatly constructive and indispensable for individuals and organizations who seek some form of improvement, progress, or gain. The Bible regularly employs a metaphorical representation of sight and vision. There are a number of passages in Scripture which refer to the notion of sight beyond the physical or "normal" vision which humans are accustomed to. This is a spiritual perception that is not limited simply to the spectrum of visible light, but rather is indicative of

an understanding that extends beyond what might be deduced or surmised from mere superficial observation. While we certainly read about physically blind people being healed in Scripture, it does not require extensive discernment to grasp that God is concerned with more than just physical sight. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, we encounter text which is clearly symbolic of both physical and spiritual sight and vision: from prophecies to prayers (Isaiah 35:5, 2 Kings 6:17, Habakkuk 2:3); from miracles to missions (Matthew 9:27-31, Mark 8:25, John 9:39-41, 1 Samuel 16:7, Acts 18:9), the Bible exhorts us to pursue the ability to see spiritual authenticity in what we behold. It is of course through spiritual sight and insight whereby God intends for us to realize the spiritual vision which can persuade and inspire us towards effecting his will in the world — to share the gospel with all, in whatever manner in which he leads. There is a well-known Bible verse which states in one translation that "Where there is no vision, the people perish ..." (KJV). Interestingly, another translation phrases it somewhat differently: "Where there is no vision [or revelation], the people are unrestrained ..." (NASB). The vision of divine revelation guides us along the path of redemption, inducing us to not stray from the way of grace and truth. As we allow God to enhance and supplement our regular, earthly vision with the vast and penetrating and profound scope of his spiritual vision, we take yet another step towards fulfilling our obligation of being in his image and likeness. We will discover a clarity of vision in which we, like Geordi with his VISOR, may be able to discern and perceive reality beyond mere mortal eyes.

DEA’s Florida Fentanyl Summit a Path Toward Healing for Family Members Who Lost Loved Ones



Drug Enforcement Administration Miami Field Division Special Agent in Charge Deanne L. Reuter speaks to Orlando, Fla., media about the fentanyl challenges currently facing the country. Reuter also provided opening remarks and sat in on a panel discussion highlighting law enforcement initiatives during the DEA's Florida Family Summit on Fentanyl.

Drug Enforcement Administration -
More than 40 families from around Florida who lost loved ones to a fentanyl poisoning recently gathered with law enforcement partners and community stakeholders at Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) third annual Florida Family Summit on Fentanyl at Westgate Lakes Resort & Spa in Orlando, Fla., to share their stories and raise awareness. Fentanyl is the greatest drug challenge the United States has faced. Flooding the U.S. from Mexico, just two milligrams is enough to be lethal. DEA laboratory analysis has shown that approximately seven out of 10 fake pills may contain a deadly dose of fentanyl. "Florida is leading the nation in fentanyl seizures in large part due to our aggressive, ingenious approach to drug interdiction and great coordination between our local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies—and partnership with community groups and victims' families," said Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody. "However, every year, more and more mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters, grieve the loss of a loved one who died suddenly of a drug overdose. We must continue to stop illicit fentanyl from entering the country and connect those struggling with substance abuse with treatment to beat their addiction." That is why events like this are so important. Law enforcement partners hear the heartfelt testimonials from those who have lost loved ones to fentanyl. The event also provides community resources to family members to help get them through this most difficult of times. "Many of you want to

be heard and share your stories," said DEA Miami Field Division Special Agent in Charge Deanne L. Reuter. "This is an opportunity to hear families speak of their journeys. We cannot do this alone, which is why we host these events. We can help save lives by working together." For nearly two hours, mothers and fathers who lost their sons and daughters and siblings to fentanyl poisonings stood up and through tearful eyes and shaky voices gave details into the passing of their loved ones. Jaime Puerta, founder of Victims of Illicit Drugs, was one such voice. "I lost my son Daniel in April 2020," he said. "I absolutely adored him." Puerta's son used a social media application to connect with a drug dealer to buy what he thought was a 30 mg oxycodone pill. It turned out to be a fake pill containing fentanyl. "I walked into my son's room on April 1, 2020, and saw what no parent should ever see ... the trauma inflicted on my family has been horrendous." Puerta's son took half a pill. Upon his death, the other half was analyzed and it contained enough fentanyl to kill four adults. "There's no such thing as recreational drugs," he said. "Those days are over." Every drug can be laced with fentanyl. Even vape pens have been known to contain it. It's a battle DEA and other law enforcement partners will continue to fight vigorously. "I feel a connection and empathize with the family members we have here," said Reuter. "Hearing their stories and seeing the way these drug poisonings have impacted them really motivates me. How could it not?"

Homestead Kiwanis’ Yvette Perez receives prestigious President’s Volunteer Service Award

Yvette Perez, treasurer of the Kiwanis Club of Homestead-South Dade, one of South Florida's most active community service organizations, was recently honored with The President's Volunteer Service Award, one of the nation's most prestigious recognition for volunteerism. Perez, a Kiwanian for three years who was recognized in the

Oklahoma City ceremony for her 12 years with the Coast Guard Auxiliary, was not expecting the award. "I was quite surprised to receive this high honor," said Perez, beaming. "I received the Medal of Merit the day before the closing gala but was stunned—almost speechless—when my name was announced as a winner of The President's

Award at the gala." For Air Force Captain Arnold Perez, president of the Kiwanis Club of Homestead, the honor wasn't a surprise. "My mom has always been willing to volunteer and help, no matter what the cause," he said. "She's always there, hand up, anxious to serve." The reason for this willingness to help? "My children—and

now my grandchildren—see my example," said Perez, an elementary school teacher with Miami Dade County Public Schools for 31 years. "And you hope they'll follow the same pathway." Obviously, Perez' example has worked, encouraging her three grown children in the importance of volunteering and duty.

In addition to Captain Perez, daughter Marlene is in the United States Navy and daughter Alexandra is married to an Air Force JAG officer. And Perez' granddaughters can be found at a wide variety of Kiwanis events helping out. "Kiwanis is an important part of my life," said Perez, who—in addition to her job as

treasurer—heads up the club's book giveaway program, Just One Book. In the past three years the club has given away more than 3,500 books to underprivileged children. "By helping children, feeding them, providing school supplies, recognizing their efforts to bring up grades, you're showing them that they matter, they're important and that someone cares."